

SAINT LUCIA 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

U.S. embassy representatives discussed religious freedom with the Red Cross of St. Lucia and with the attorney general. When the media reported that a Seventh-day Adventist stated that her employment termination was due to religious discrimination, an embassy officer discussed the case with the labor commissioner and union officials.

Section I. Religious Demography

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 162,800 (July 2013 estimate). The 2010 Population and Housing Census reports Roman Catholics account for approximately 61.1 percent of the population, Seventh-day Adventists 10.4 percent, Pentecostals 8.8 percent, evangelicals 2.2 percent, Baptists 2.1 percent, and Rastafarians 2 percent. Other groups together constituting less than 5 percent of the population include Anglicans, members of the Church of God, Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Muslims, and Bahais. Nearly 6 percent of the population claims no religious affiliation.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom. An antiblasphemy law is not enforced. The government is secular and maintains an active relationship with the Christian Council, an organization consisting of representatives of the Catholic Church and some Protestant denominations.

The government's revised registration policy for religious groups regulates missionary work and labor permits, and allows a religious group to have duty-free import privileges and exemption from some labor requirements. It also covers regulation of nondenominational groups.

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The public school curriculum includes Christian education; however, non-Christian students are not required to participate. There also are private schools sponsored by the Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, and Anglican churches.

The government prohibits the use of marijuana including for religious purposes.

Government Practices

In an incident widely reported in local newspapers in 2012, an employee of the St. Lucia Electricity Company (LUCELEC), a public entity, was fired for refusing to work on Saturday. A Seventh-day Adventist, the employee was quoted in the media as saying she would never work on the Sabbath and stated that her termination was unjustified and due to religious discrimination. The National Workers Union (NWU) took up the employee's cause. LUCELEC publicly stated that according to the terms of her contract, the employee would be available to work at any time when needed. The case is to be heard by a tribunal but, as of year's end, no date had been set for the hearing.

Rastafarians complained about the government's prohibition of marijuana use, which they described as integral to their religious rituals.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

Embassy officers discussed religious freedom with the government, nongovernmental organizations, and religious charitable organizations. The embassy raised the issue of the dismissed Seventh-day Adventist with the government. Embassy officers met with the solicitor general and the Red Cross to discuss religious freedom.